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Message Text

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AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 14019 ACTION SECSTATE DATED
MAY 17, 1978.

QUOTE: UNCLAS BANGKOK 14019

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: CONTINENTAL AIRLINES PROPOSAL TO HANDLE TRANSPORTATION
OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES

FOR HA/ORM

REF: BANGKOK 12853

1. SUMMARY: CONTINENTAL AIRLINES MAY 15 SUBMITTED THE
FOLLOWING PROPOSAL TO HANDLE THE TRANSPORTATION OF INDO-
CHINESE REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES.
CONTINENTAL WOULD HANDLE ALL THE FUNCTIONS THAT ICEM
NOW COVERS EXCEPT MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS. THERE WOULD
BE NO CHARGE TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR CONTINENTAL'S
SERVICES EXCEPT FOR COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATIONS NEEDED
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PAGE 02 STATE 126059

TO NOTIFY INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES OF
ARRIVAL INFORMATION. COMMENT ON THE PROPOSAL FOLLOWS
IN SEPTEL. END SUMMARY

2. GENERAL OUTLINES OF CONTINENTAL'S PROPOSAL FOLLOW:

A. THE MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

UNITED STATES IS ABOUT TO REACH A HIGH LEVEL AND WITH
THE CONCERN OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE VICE PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES IN THE WELFARE OF INDO-CHINA REFUGEES,
THERE IS A CRITICAL NEED FOR THE EFFICIENT SUPERVISION
OF REFUGEE TRAVEL TO AMERICA. CONTINENTAL AIRLINES HAS
EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH REFUGEES IN 1975, AND
WITH ICEM IN 1976, AND WE OFFER OUR ASSISTANCE TO THE
REFUGEE SECTION AND ICEM TO MAKE ALL ARRANGEMENTS FOR
REFUGEE TRAVEL FROM THE TRANSIT CENTER IN BANGKOK TO
THE FINAL DESTINATION CITY IN THE UNITED STATES; AND TO
DO THIS AT NO COST TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
EXCEPT FOR THE COST OF THE REFUGEE'S AIRLINE TICKET.

B. IN 1976, AT A TIME WHEN THERE WAS GREAT
DIFFICULTY OBTAINING SPACE FOR REFUGEES TRAVELING ACROSS
THE PACIFIC, CONTINENTAL AIRLINES ESTABLISHED AN OFFICE
NEAR THE ICEM HEADQUARTERS IN BANGKOK, BROUGHT OUT
EXPERIENCED EMPLOYEES FROM THE UNITED STATES, AND WORKED
WITH ICEM TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS THAT OVERCAME THE SHORTAGE
OF SEATS AND SUCCESSFULLY MOVED LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES
TO THE UNITED STATES. NOW WITH REFUGEE MOVEMENTS REACH-
ING A PEAK UNDER THE 1977 PROGRAM, WITH A NEW 1978
PROGRAM ABOUT TO START, AND WITH THE EFFECTS OF THE
NORTHWEST AIRLINES STRIKE; THERE IS AGAIN A SERIOUS
SHORTAGE OF AIRLINE SPACE ACROSS THE PACIFIC.

C. CONTINENTAL AIRLINES IS PREPARED TO ASSIST THE
REFUGEE SECTION AS OUTLINED IN THE ATTACHED PROPOSAL.
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THE SERVICES OFFERED IN THIS PROPOSAL WOULD SAVE THE
UNITED STATES EMBASSY REFUGEE SECTION, ICEM, AND THE
VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, TIME, MANPOWER, AND MONEY. IN
ADDITION, THERE IS A FACTOR IN OUR PROPOSAL THAT
EXCEEDS EFFICIENCY IN IMPORTANCE; THE PRIMARY CONCERN
OF OUR COMPANY TO ASSIST REFUGEE PASSENGERS AND TO MAKE
THEIR TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES AS COMFORTABLE AS
POSSIBLE.

3. SPECIFIC ITEMS OF THE PROPOSAL FOLLOW:

A. TICKET ALL REFUGEES TRAVELING FROM THAILAND TO
THE UNITED STATES BOTH ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL
AIRLINES.

B. MAKE ALL AIRLINE RESERVATIONS AND WORK WITH ALL
AIRLINES TO OBTAIN SPACE NECESSARY TO MOVE REFUGEE
PASSENGERS TO THE UNITED STATEXS WITHOUT DELAY.

C. MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO MOVE REFUGEE PASSENGERS
FROM THE TRANSIT CENTER IN BANGKOK TO DON MUANG AIRPORT,
TO HANDLE THEIR DEPARTURE FORMALITIES AT THE AIRPORT,
AND TO WORK WITH AIRPORT OFFICIALS TO INSURE THAT THE
PROCESSING OF REFUGEES IS HANDLED PROPERLY AND WITHOUT

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Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

HARDSHIP TO THE REFUGEES.

D. MAKE AVAILABLE THE CONTINENTAL AIRLINES BANGKOK AIRPORT OFFICE TO THE STAFF OF THE U.S. EMBASSY REFUGEE SECTION AND ICEM. (THE OFFICE IS LOCATED ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE AIRPORT DEPARTURE HALL NEXT TO THE CHECK-IN COUNTERS AND WAS USED BY ICEM IN 1976).

E. CHECK THE PAPERWORK ACCOMPANYING EACH REFUGEE PASSENGER TO INSURE THAT THEY HAVE THE PROPER DOCUMENTS TO TRAVEL, TO TRANSIT FOREIGN COUNTRIES, AND TO BE ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES.

F. BOOK SPACE FOR REFUGEE PASSENGERS TRAVELING ON DOMESTIC AIRLINES AS FAR IN ADVANCE AS POSSIBLE SO THAT A REFUGEE WILL NOT BE DELAYED IN THAILAND, AND IF POSSIBLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SPECIAL LOW FARES WHICH OFFER

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UP TO A 40 PERCENT SAVINGS FROM THE REGULAR ECONOMY FARE WITH NO REDUCTION IN THE QUALITY OF SERVICE.

G. CHECK AIRLINE TARIFFS PUBLISHED AND FILED WITH THE CAB TO INSURE THAT THE LOWEST LEGAL FARES ARE USED FOR REFUGEE TRAVEL. (OFTEN AIRLINE FARES LISTED IN TRADE PUBLICATIONS; SUCH AS THE ABC AND OAG ARE ACCEPTED WITHOUT CHECKING THE ACTUAL TARIFFS. SOMETIMES FARES LISTED IN TRADE PUBLICATIONS ARE NOT CURRENT OR ACCURATE, AND THEY ARE NOT THE OFFICIAL SOURCE FOR FARES).

H. HAVE INSTANT ACCESS TO THE CONTINENTAL AIRLINES SONIC RESERVATIONS SYSTEM FROM OUR BANGKOK OFFICE AND ARRANGE FOR PERSONNEL IN OUR LOS ANGELES RESERVATIONS CENTER TO WORK IN COORDINATION WITH OUR STAFF IN BANGKOK TO INSURE THAT ALL RESERVATIONS REQUESTS RECEIVED FROM BANGKOK FOR SPACE ON ANY AIRLINES WILL BE ANSWERED IN MINIMUM TIME. IF THE BANGKOK OFFICE WERE OPEN FROM 0800 TO 1900 BANGKOK TIME, PERSONNEL IN THE LOS ANGELES OFFICE WOULD WORK THE SAME SCHEDULE BASED ON THE TIME DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE TWO OFFICES. (IN 1976, THE ABILITY OF CONTINENTAL AIRLINES TO OBTAIN QUICK CONFIRMATION OF AIRLINE RESERVATIONS ON ALL DOMESTIC AIRLINES WAS HELPFUL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE 1976 PROGRAM AND GAVE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES MAXIMUM TIME TO NOTIFY SPONSORS IN THE UNITED STATES ABOUT THE ARRIVAL SCHEDULES OF REFUGEE PASSENGERS).

I. KEEP THE U.S. REFUGEE SECTION ADVISED ABOUT ALL AVIATION DEVELOPMENTS; SUCH AS STRIKES, LABOR SLOW EOWNS, CHANGES IN AIRLINE SCHEDULES, FARES AND OTHER MATTERS THAT MIGHT DELAY OR SERIOUSLY UPSET THE MOVEMENT OF REFUGEE PASSENGERS.

J. WRITE INSTRUCTIONS IN A LANGUAGE THE REFUGEE PASSENGER CAN READ, (TO BE GIVEN THE PASSENGER BEFORE HE LEAVES THE TRANSIT CENTER), EXPLAINING CAREFULLY WHAT HE

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Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

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CAN EXPECT AS HE TRAVELS TO THE UNITED STATES. INSTRUC-
TIONS WOULD INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE AIRCRAFT, THE
LENGTH OF THE FLIGHT, WHERE LAVATORIES ARE LOCATED, HOW
OFTEN MEALS ARE SERVED, WHAT FREE SERVICES ARE OFFERED
ON THE FLIGHT, SPECIAL FACILITIES FOR BABIES, ETC.

K. HIRE LOCAL STAFF TO ASSIST THE REFUGEE PASSENGER
ON HIS DEPARTURE FROM THAILAND AND IF REQUESTED, ARRANGE
FOR A CONTINENTAL AIRLINES REPRESENTATIVE TO WORK IN THE
U.S. REFUGEE SECTION OR THE ICEM OFFICE TO ASSIST IN
HANDLING ALL TRAVEL PROBLEMS AS THEY DEVELOP.

4. CONCLUSION: ALL OF THE WORK OUTLINED ABOVE WOULD BE
ACCOMPLISHED AT NO COST OF THE REFUGEE SECTION OR ICEM.
IF WE ARE REQUESTED TO ASSIST IN NOTIFYING ALL INTERESTED
PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES OF THE ARRIVAL INFORMATION
REGARDING EACH REFUGEE, WE WOULD REQUEST REIMBURSEMENT
ONLY FOR THE COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATIONS COST INVOLVED,
BUT THERE WOULD BE NO CHARGE FOR ANY COMMUNICATIONS
COSTS WITH OTHER AIRLINES, OR ANY COMMUNICATIONS COST
RELATING TO AIRLINE MATTERS, SUCH AS MAKING AIRLINE
RESERVATIONS.
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